

The role of silver in American culture from the colonial era to the present is illustrated in the exhibition, Silver in American Life, Selections from the Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University, on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from June 24 through August 16, 1981. The exhibition consists of more than 200 objects--from silver ore and ingots to coins, tableware, trophies and jewelry--and includes the earliest, as well as some of the finest, works in American silver known.

Organized by Yale University Art Gallery and The American Federation of Arts, the exhibition is being lent to twelve American museums. The exhibition, catalog, and accompanying educational materials are made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Patrons of The American Federation of the Arts. The Cleveland showing is assisted by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council.

Objects in the exhibition were drawn principally from the Mabel Brady Garvan collection of silver given to Yale in 1930 by Francis P. Garvan, a member of the Yale class of 1897, in honor of his wife. This outstanding collection consists of works made primarily before 1825 and contains some masterpieces of early American silver. The superb examples of 19th- and 20th-century silversmithing exhibited here were added to the Yale collections since the Garvan gift, many within the last decade. To complete the story of American silver, objects have also been selected from the mineral, numismatics, and natural history collections at Yale, as well as the department of athletics.

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The exhibition begins by examining the sources of silver, its characteristics as a metal, and its applications in industry and the arts, particularly photography. The second section, which contains coins and commemorative medals, illustrates the role of silver in commerce and trade and traces the history of the American silver dollar from 1794 to 1935.

The third and fourth sections of the exhibition focus on techniques employed in making silver and the evolution of the silversmith's profession from colonial times to the present. Exhibited here are some of the colonial silversmith's tools and some of his typical handcrafted wares. Paul Revere's famous silver pitcher, which copies the design of a contemporary English ceramic pitcher, demonstrates how imported English goods served as design sources for colonial silversmiths.

In the 19th century the making of silver objects evolved from a craft to an industry. Machine methods of shaping and decorating silver were introduced, and the silversmith who designed, made, and retailed his own wares gradually disappeared, replaced by a specialist trained in one phase of silver production. Discoveries of silver in the American West and the development of electroplating techniques in the mid-19th century stimulated a market for silver and silver plated goods and encouraged the development of mass production techniques in the manufacture of silver.

Around the turn of the century there was a reaction against the mechanically produced standardized designs of 19th-century silver. Proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement advocated a return to handwork, insisting upon simplicity of form and harmonious ornamentation. A beverage set handcrafted by Karl Leinonen in 1906 and a pitcher and tray in water lily motif, designed around 1900 by William Codman, chief designer for Gorham Manufacturing Company, exemplify the new aesthetic.

Beginning in the late 1950s a new generation of academically-trained metalsmiths rebelled against mass manufacturing and "traditional" styling by creating handcrafted objects utilizing new techniques and strong contemporary forms. The

creativity of the contemporary artist-craftsman is seen in Robert Ebendorf's architectonic coffee pot and Mary Ann Scherr's silver and agate necklace.

The exhibition next looks at the role of silver in American religious and secular rituals and its significance as a status symbol. Shown here are vessels used at religious services, presentation pieces and trophies, Navajo silverwork, jewelry, and tableware. A 17th-century cupboard, a tea table of about 1770, and a dining table of the 1890s are dressed with silver to illustrate ways in which silver was used and displayed in the home. One of the exhibition's masterpieces is a beautifully proportioned two-handled covered cup commissioned from the Boston silversmith Jacob Hurd in 1774 for presentation to Captain Edward Tyng for his part in capturing a French privateer during King George's War.

The last and largest section of the exhibition examines stylistic changes in American silver over the past three hundred years. A display of nine spoons of various styles made between 1670 and 1978 introduces this theme. Also exhibited here is the earliest known piece of American silver, a dram cup made in Boston in about 1650 by Robert Sanderson and John Hull.

A prime example of 17th-century style in American silver is a covered cup with smooth rounded body and cast caryatid handles by John Coney of Boston. Coney's workmanship is also seen in a masterpiece of baroque style, a lavishly decorated monteith bowl (used to cool wine glasses), made ca. 1700-1710. The Queen Anne style, with its balanced, symmetrical forms, smooth shiny surfaces, and rhythmic curves, is well represented. Two outstanding works in this style, which was popular between 1715 and 1750, are an octagonal teapot by New York craftsman Peter van Dyck and a salver by Jacob Hurd. An 18th-century candlestick and dish ring by Myer Myers of New York are among the finest expressions in American silver of the light and delicate rococo style.

Designs of revolutionary and federal period silver, such as Abraham Dubois's urn-shaped tea set, were inspired by the art of classical antiquity. The introduction

at this time of rolled sheet silver, used by Paul Revere in fashioning his oval fluted teapot, and mass-produced bands of ornament, also affected the design of neoclassic silver. In the 19th century, rapidly changing stylistic revivals occurred, proceeding with antique through rococo, Renaissance, and Gothic, and then on to a series of fads for the exotic--Moorish, Persian, and Japanese.

Twentieth century silver has also been characterized by stylistic diversity. At the turn of the century, the opulent naturalistic designs of Art Nouveau co-existed with the functionalism of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic. While simple and functional designs have become more popular, there is still a taste for traditional forms in silver, and periodically there have been revivals of interest in reproducing historic works of American silver. Recent trends in the art can be seen in a teapot influenced by Danish design by silversmith Hans Christensen and a neckpiece of woven silver wire by Mary Lee Hu.

Gallery talks on the exhibition will be given everyday at 1:30 p.m. from Wednesday, June 24, through Tuesday, June 30 (except Monday when the Museum is closed). Additional talks are scheduled at 1:30 p.m. on July 15 and 19 and August 12 and 16 with a special talk for the hearing impaired on Tuesday, August 4, at 1:30 p.m.

The Silversmith of Williamsburg, a 30-minute color film, showing 18th-century techniques of silversmithing, produced by Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., and Silver in American Life, a 10-minute color film produced for the exhibition, will be shown in the Lecture Hall at 2:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

In addition, Barbara Kathman, instructor in the Museum's Department of Art History and Education, will present a series of lectures surveying the history and techniques of silversmithing on three successive Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m., beginning June 30.

The fully-illustrated catalog for the exhibition can be purchased from the Museum's Sales Desk for \$10.95. A free illustrated guide to the exhibition is also available.